

Message Text

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MBFR-03 SAJ-01 GAC-01 EB-11 STR-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00

CPR-02 OPR-02 SY-10 RSR-01 EURE-00 /130 W

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P R 231801 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5261

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

USMISSION BERLIN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 07452

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GW, UR

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV VISIT: FURTHER IMPRESSIONS

REF: A) BONN 7381; B) BONN 7382

1. SUMMARY: BASED ON DISCUSSIONS WITH VARIOUS SENIOR FRG OFFICIALS IN THE PAST TWO DAYS, WE HAVE FORMED SOME IMPRESSIONS OF THE BREZHNEV VISIT, SUPPLEMENTING INFORMATION CONVEYED REFTELS, BOTH WITH REGARD TO THE SUBSTANCE OF THE VISIT AND TO THE CHARACTER OF BREZHNEV THE MAN. END SUMMARY.

2. DESPITE THE UNIQUE HISTORICAL NATURE OF THE VISIT, THE FIRST BY A TOP SOVIET LEADER TO THE FRG SINCE THE LATTER'S FOUNDING, THE CONCRETE SUBSTANTIVE RESULTS WERE APPARENTLY FAIRLY LIMITED. THE FRG MADE LITTLE
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HEADWAY ON CONVINCING THE SOVIETS TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE ON BERLIN, DESPITE SOME FRG OFFICIALS' CLAIMS TO THE CONTRARY; IT ALSO APPARENTLY MADE LITTLE HEADWAY ON ITS PROBLEMS IN DEALING WITH THE GDR, ALTHOUGH THE EFFECTS OF BRANDT'S TALKS WITH BREZHNEV IN THIS REGARD WILL TAKE TIME TO EMERGE. THE SOVIETS OBTAINED SOME POSITIVE STATEMENTS ON TRADE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION, BUT THESE ARE VAGUE ENOUGH TO ALLOW THE FRG TO IMPLEMENT THEM AT SOME UNDEFINED POINT IN THE FUTURE. THEY ALSO GOT HELPFUL NOISES ABOUT THE VALUE OF EAST- WEST DETENTE WHICH WILL BE OF USE IN KEEPING BREZHNEV'S WESTPOLITIK BALL ROLLING.

3. THE IMPACT OF THE VISIT PROBABLY SHOULD NOT BE ASSESSED PRINCIPALLY IN CONCRETE SUBSTANTIVE TERMS, HOWEVER, BUT MORE IN TERMS OF ATMOSPHERICS. AND IT IS CLEAR TO US THAT THE GERMANS FEEL THEY HAVE MADE A MAJOR STEP FORWARD ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE: ONLY THREE WEEKS AFTER BRANDT'S SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO THE US, THEY NOW HAVE HAD BREZHNEV PAY COURT TO THEM IN BONN. THUS, THEY SEE BOTH SUPERPOWERS AS INTERESTED IN ESTABLISHING CLOSE TIES WITH THE FRG, WHICH WAS FOR SO LONG ALMOST AN INTERNATIONAL PARIAH, ESPECIALLY TO THE USSR AND ITS ALLIES. THIS IS HEADY STUFF, AND THE EXHILARATION AND INCREASED SELF- CONFIDENCE THE GERMANS DISPLAYED FOLLOWING THE WASHINGTON VISIT HAVE REACHED A NEW LEVEL OF INTENSITY IN THE WAKE OF THE SOVIET LEADER'S STAY HERE.

4. THE GERMANS WILL, OF COURSE, EVENTUALLY COME BACK TO EARTH AS THEY ARE CONFRONTED WITH CONCRETE DIFFICULTIES WITH THE USSR (AND GDR) IN THE FUTURE. BUT FOR THE MOMENT, THEY ARE SAVORING WHAT THEY REGARD AS A REAL SUCCESS FOR THEIR EAST- WEST POLICIES OF THE LAST FEW YEARS. FROM TALKS WITH SEVERAL SOVIET DIPLOMATS, THE SOVIETS ARE TAKING A MUCH MORE BLASE VIEW OF THE VISIT AND ARE MAKING EFFORTS TO PLAY DOWN ITS IMPORTANCE, AND CERTAINLY TO COUNTER ANY IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIETS MADE ANY CONCESSIONS ON BERLIN MATTERS. OUR OWN IMPRESSION IS THAT THE GERMANS THINK THEY WON SOME GROUND FROM THE SOVIETS, ESPECIALLY IN BERLIN, WHILE
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THE SOVIETS THINK THEY GAVE UP NOTHING. IT WAS THE SORT OF DISCUSSION IN WHICH BOTH GERMANS AND SOVIETS SEEMED TO TALK PAST EACH OTHER THAT HAS NOT BEEN UNKNOWN IN SOVIET- WEST GERMAN EXCHANGES. ONLY TIME WILL TELL HOW MUCH EACH SIDE IN EFFECT DID GAIN FROM THE VISIT, APART FROM THE PROBABLY POSITIVE ASPECT OF A FURTHER STEP IN THE FRG- USSR NORMALIZATION PROCESS.

5. AS TO THE GERMAN VIEW OF BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL STATUS AND STYLE, THE IMPRESSIONS WE HAVE RECEIVED HAVE BEEN FAIRLY CLEAR. THE GERMANS THINK HE IS ASSUMING MORE AND MORE A TSAR- LIKE APPROACH, EXPRESSING HIS AUTHORITY TO SPEAK FOR THE SOVIET PEOPLE AND PARTY IN ABSOLUTE TERMS. HE IS IMPATIENT WITH DETAILS, GIVES THE APPEARANCE OF BEING FAIRLY DISORGANIZED, AND IS FIRMLY OPPOSED TO STRICT PROTOCOL AND PROGRAM ARRANGEMENTS. (FYI: ONE OF HIS KEY AIDES, ALEKSANDROV,

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 07452

TOLD A SENIOR FRG OFFICIAL THAT THE UNSTRUCTURED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE VISIT THAT PREVAILED IN BONN ARE EXACTLY WHAT BREZHNEV HAS IN MIND FOR HIS VISIT TO THE US IN JUNE.)

6. THE GERMANS WERE ALSO IMPRESSED BY BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL BEHAVIOR. WHILE HE SEEMED NERVOUS AND ILL AT EASE AT THE OUTSET OF THE VISIT, HE INCREASINGLY

RELAXED AS THE DAYS WENT BY. HE DRANK AND SMOKED
HEAVILY, OCCASIONALLY FELL ASLEEP AT DINNERS, SOME-
TIMES SEEMED TO OVERINDULGE HIS TASTE FOR VODKA AND HAD
TO LEAVE THE DINING ROOM FOR BRIEF PERIODS TO
RECUPERATE. HE TREATED A VISITING GERMAN- SOVIET
FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY DELEGATION WITH GREAT DISDAIN,
FIRST OBLIGING IT TO COME TO BONN FROM DORTMUND WHERE
HE HAD ORIGINALLY PLANNED TO VISIT WITH THE GROUP, AND
THEN REFUSING TO SEE IT IN BONN BECAUSE HE WANTED TO
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LOOK AT A MERCEDES DIFFERENT IN COLOR FROM THE SILVER
ONE BRANDT HAD GIVEN HIM. (HE EVENTUALLY CHOSE A BLUE
ONE.) IN SUM, HE GAVE THE APPEARANCE OF AN AUTOCRATIC,
SELF- ASSURED LEADER WHO CARED LITTLE FOR THE NICETIES
OF PROTOCOL OR PERSONAL BEHAVIOR. SURPRISINGLY, MANY
OF OUR GERMAN SOURCES DID NOT SEEM TO FIND THIS STYLE
OF LEADERSHIP OFFENSIVE, ALTHOUGH SOMEWHAT BIZARRE.

7. ONE SPECIFIC ASPECT OF BREZHNEV' S APPROACH HAD A
STRONG IMPRESSION ON THE GERMANS: THIS WAS HIS CON-
STANT ALLUSION TO THE HORRIBLE NATURE OF AND HIS
EXPERIENCES IN WORLD WAR II. IT WAS EVIDENT THAT THIS
IS PART OF HIS BACKGROUND WHICH TO THIS DAY
CONSTITUTES A MAJOR ELEMENT IN HIS MENTAL MAKEUP. THE
GERMANS WERE TAKEN ABACK AT HOW MUCH BREZHNEV REMINISCED
ON THIS SUBJECT IN INFORMAL CONVERSATION.
HILLENBRAND

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